A STUDY OF THE WOODEN CEILING OF THE GRAN SALONE
AUBERGE DE PROVENCE

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Dissertation submitted to the Institute for Masonry Construction and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Conservation Technology for Masonry Buildings

ABSTRACT
The wooden ceiling of the Gran Salone in Auberge de Provence, is one of the finest examples we have on this island of a poly-chromed coffered ceiling.

This study has the following aims:
• To analyse deeply the wooden ceiling, including the actual situation and the state of conservation of the wooden elements making up the ceiling
• To propose a method of documenting this ceiling, in order to arrive to the best conservation/restoration strategy possible.

Thus the course of study a methodology was formulated in order to document the present condition of the roof and also all the past changes of the ceiling.

The most important factors that were studied are:
☑ The history of the building / ceiling
☑ The state of the timber, including the method of assembling and fixing
☑ The effect of the properties and the condition of the wood on the paint layer
☑ The environmental conditions of the ceiling

The history of the ceiling, including previous restoration works and amendments were considered important and were actually vital in helping understand the behaviour of the ceiling. Comparison to other similar structures also proved to be helpful in diagnosing the problems of the ceiling.

The condition of the timber, including the sagging it is exhibiting, the insect attack and humidity levels in the timber were all analysed. The latter were also compared to the environmental conditions the ceiling is in, since the moisture content in the wood is directly related to the humidity and temperature levels in the air.

Even though it was outside the scope of the thesis to go in the problems of the paint layer, documentation of part of the ceiling showing the extent of paint loss being exhibited was carried out. This was done in order to be able to identify whether the paint loss is actually being exhibited due particular wood properties and behaviour or due to other phenomena.

All the results were presented in graphical form on drawings using different layers and textures in order to have a clear picture of what is happening.
All this information and documentation helped in arriving to the best conservation strategy and even to proposals for interventions that are thought to be necessary in order to safeguard and prolong the life of this ceiling with such an important cultural value.